

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1-4 as presented below. Please cancel Claims 5-17 without any prejudice or disclaimers. Please add new claims 18-22 as presented below.

1. **(Currently Amended)** An optical fiber connection structure wherein optical fibers are connected by means of a component for connecting optical fibers comprising two plugs, into which at least one optical fiber has been inserted respectively, for aligning said optical fibers and connecting them, and an adapter for fixing said plugs one by one in a direction perpendicular to the axial direction of the optical fiber, wherein said plugs are each independently detachable from the adapter in a direction perpendicular to the axial direction of the optical fiber,

wherein said plug is provided with one or more ferrules having one or more ends, each ferrule of said plug is provided with a ferrule aligning member, said ferrule aligning member capable of sliding in a direction of the center axis of the optical fiber,

wherein said ends of opposed ferrules brought face to face with each other are located inside said ferrule aligning member as a result of sliding the ferrule aligning member in the direction of the center axis of the optical fibers after the plugs are attached to the adapter.

2. **(Currently Amended)** The optical fiber connection structure according to Claim 1, wherein either the plug or the adapter is equipped with a latch member and the other has a latch engaging section(s), and the plug is fixed to the adapter by engaging the latch member with the latch engaging section said ferrule aligning member is attached to the adapter.

3. **(Currently Amended)** The optical fiber connection structure according to Claim 1, or Claim 2, wherein either the plug or the adapter has a guide(s) for alignment and the other is equipped with a convex member for alignment which engages with said groove guide wherein said ferrule aligning member is attached to a ferrule of at least one of two plugs.

4. **(Currently Amended)** An optical fiber connection structure wherein optical fibers are connected by means of a component for connecting optical fibers comprising two plugs, into which at least one optical fiber has been inserted respectively, for aligning said optical fibers and connecting them, and an adapter for fixing said plugs, one by one in a direction perpendicular to the axial direction of the optical fiber. ~~The optical fiber connection structure according to Claim 1,~~ wherein the plug and the adapter have each a through-hole(s) for alignment, said through-hole being capable of being slidably inserted by a guide pin therein, and the plug is fixed to the

adapter by inserting the guide pin through said through-hole of the adapter into said through-hole after the plug is attached to the adapter.

5-17. **(Cancelled)**

18. **(New)** An optical fiber connecting method which comprises:

inserting at least one optical fiber into two plugs respectively, each plug having a slidable member which is capable of sliding with respect to the two plugs in an axial direction of the optical fiber;

attaching said two plugs to an adapter in a direction perpendicular to the axial direction of the optical fiber;

fixing said two plugs to the adapter, by sliding each slidable member with respect to the two plugs in the axial direction of the optical fiber, wherein each of the two plugs are provided with a ferrule;

attaching a ferrule aligning member to the ferrule of at least one of the said two plugs, said ferrule aligning member being slidable;

attaching each plug to the adapter in a direction perpendicular to the center axis of the optical fiber to fix the plugs to the adapter in such a state that the ferrules of the plugs oppose near to each other; and

sliding the ferrule aligning member in a direction of the center axis of the optical fiber so that the ends of the opposed ferrules are located inside said ferrule aligning member.

19. **(New)** An optical fiber connecting method which comprises:

inserting at least one optical fiber into two plugs respectively, each plug having a slidable member which is capable of sliding with respect to the two plugs in an axial direction of the optical fiber;

attaching said two plugs to an adapter in a direction perpendicular to the axial direction of the optical fiber;

fixing said two plugs to the adapter, by sliding each slidable member with respect to the two plugs in the axial direction of the optical fiber, wherein each of the two plugs are provided with a ferrule;

attaching one of two plugs, into which an optical fiber is inserted, to another adapter provided with a ferrule aligning member, said ferrule aligning member being slidable in a direction perpendicular to the center axis of the optical fiber;

sliding said ferrule aligning member so as to attach to the ferrule;

attaching the other plug to the adapter in a direction perpendicular to the center axis of the optical fiber so that the ferrules oppose near to each other; and

sliding the ferrule aligning member in a direction of the center axis of the optical fiber so that the ends of opposed ferrules are located inside said ferrule aligning member

20. (New) The optical fiber connecting method according to Claim 18 or 19, wherein the plug is equipped with a plurality of ferrules.

21. (New) An optical fiber connecting method which comprises:

inserting at least one optical fiber into two plugs respectively, each plug having a slidable member which is capable of sliding with respect to the two plugs in an axial direction of the optical fiber;

attaching said two plugs to an adapter in a direction perpendicular to the axial direction of the optical fiber;

fixing said two plugs to the adapter, by sliding each slidable member with respect to the two plugs in the axial direction of the optical fiber, wherein the slidable member is a guide pin, and the two plugs and the adapter each have a through-hole(s) for alignment, wherein the guide pin is inserted in the through-hole of each plug,

wherein sliding the slidable member comprises, inserting another guide pin into the through-hole(s) in one edge of said adapter to forcibly push said guide pin already inserted in the plug, thereby fixing the opposed plugs to the adapter,

22. (New) The optical fiber connecting method according to Claim 21, wherein a fixing member provided with a guide pin(s) and being slidable to the adapter is used as a means for insertion of another guide pin into the through-hole(s) of the adapter and the adapter is mounted on the fixing member, wherein said fixing member is slid in one direction so as to insert the guide pin into the through-hole of the adapter.